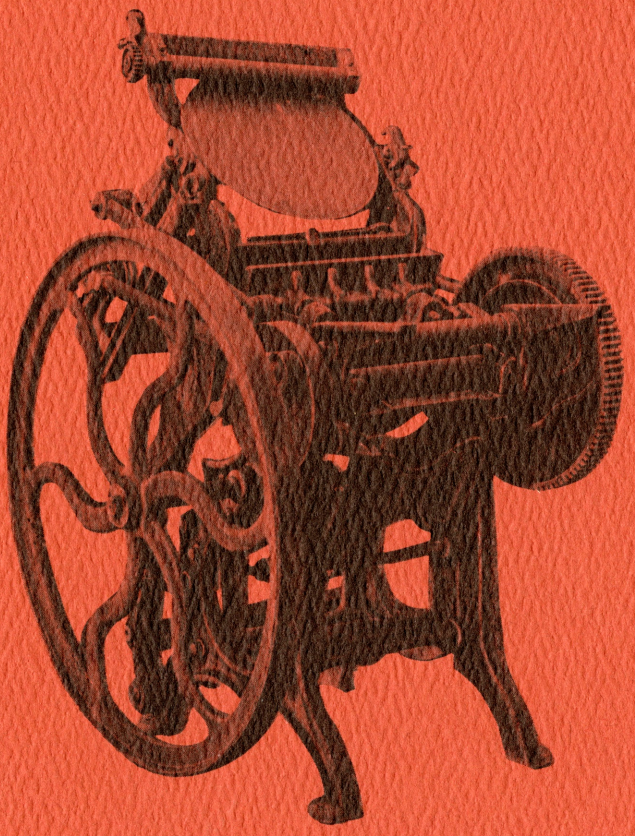
BOOMTOWN BANNERS



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BY

THE DEATH VALLEY 49ERS

NOVEMBER 6, 7, 8, 9, 1980

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*Deceased

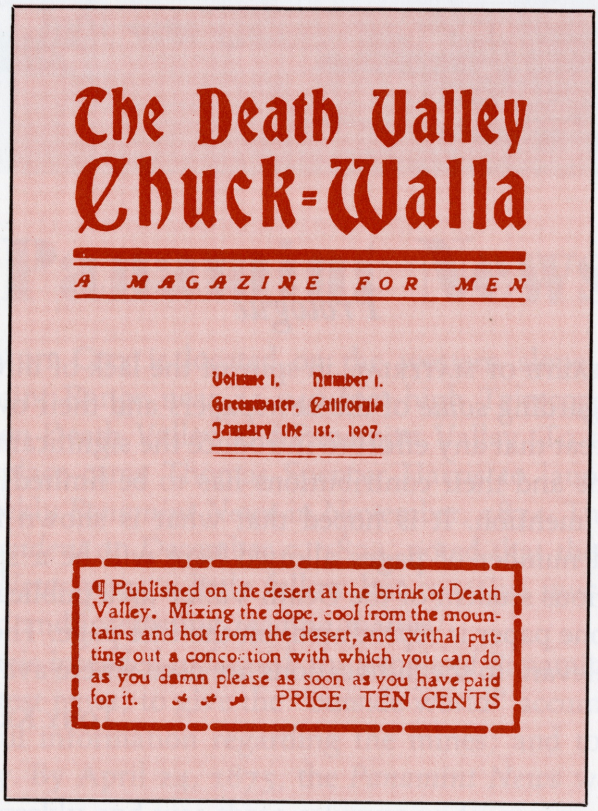
The press pictured on the cover printed the *Greenwater Miner* and the tenth and final issue of the *Death Valley Chuck-Walla* before a fire destroyed the building and equipment.

The final resting place of the press is the museum at Furnace Creek Ranch.

BOOMTOWN BANNERS

By RICHARD CROWE

Edited by RON MILLER *and* TONY KROLL


The Death Valley
Chuck-Walla
A MAGAZINE FOR MEN
Volume I. Number 1.
Greenwater, California
January the 1st. 1907.
¶ Published on the desert at the brink of Death Valley. Mixing the dope, cool from the mountains and hot from the desert, and withal putting out a concoction with which you can do as you damn please as soon as you have paid for it.
PRICE, TEN CENTS

1980

THE DEATH VALLEY 49ERS: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Dedicated to all newspaper persons
who spent their lives in the
Death Valley region

Prologue

THE WEALTH OF MATERIAL, in spite of the lack of information regarding *some* of the newspapers and their owners, is so great that any effort to introduce the significant publications and their contributions has to be limited to the merest mention. It is hoped that what is shown in the limited number of pages allotted here will be a spur to the serious student of the Death Valley area publications. Only one paper is reproduced, on the title page. The banners relevant to the publications are used where available.

TONY KROLL

Illustration on facing page: Leadfield, California. Photographer, Stephen Willard. From The Death Valley Library, National Park Service.

Panamint News.

PANAMINT CITY is located on the western slope of the Panamint Range near 11,049-foot-high Telescope Peak between Death Valley and Panamint Valley. To this remote place came Thomas Spencer Harris to launch the tri-weekly *Panamint News* in November, 1874. The *Inyo Independent* on December 5, 1874, noted that the *Panamint News* was "a little fellow but contains much condensed and interesting reading matter."

Harris intended to furnish the people of Panamint with the latest news; to give the "outside world" accurate and truthful information regarding the mines; and to make money. By April 24, 1875, the *Panamint News* was still a tri-weekly and was three columns wide, measuring 10 by 14 inches. However, the hangers-on and many important citizens were leaving. Shortly, the voluminous Martha Camp and her dizzy damsels departed.

COSO MINING NEWS.

WHEN THE BLUSH of Panamint was declining, editor T. S. Harris decided that he had better close his unprofitable *Panamint News* and move his *nonpareil* press over to greener pastures. He informed his readers that mail would reach him at Darwin, where so many members of Panamint had recently gone. In November, 1875, he first published the *Coso Mining News.*

The first issue stated that Darwin had about 150 substantial houses to give it an air of permanency, and the town had about twenty ladies and more were arriving with every stage. Darwin, as described in the second issue of the publication, was twenty miles southeast of Owens Lake and fifty-six miles from Independence, and situated on a plateau on the southern slope of the Inyo Mountains.

In 1878, the *Inyo Independent* reported that the *Coso Mining News* had ceased publication on September 14, stating that for some time it had been evident that Inyo County could not support two newspapers. It further related that the material of the *News* office was being taken to Bodie where it would merge with the tri-weekly *Standard* which had recently been purchased by Harris and Elliott. Harris eventually moved on and started the *Semi-Weekly Standard* in Santa Ana in 1882 and then the *Weekly News* at Lancaster in 1885.

Desert Magazine's article entitled, "The Trials of T.S. Harris," by Howard Linder states:

> He opened a small print shop in San Francisco, but was unable to make a living at this business. He was forced to move into an apartment with his wife's relatives. His health failed and periodically he spent time in the Old Soldier's Home. One night in 1893, he left the apartment and wandered through the fog of San Francisco. Despondent, after a prolonged drinking

spree, he took a room in a lodging house. After he had drained the last bottle . . . he crossed the room, removed his old English Bulldog revolver from a small valise, and fired a .44 bullet into his head.

He was fifty-four years old!

THE GOLDFIELD NEWS

WORKING in a hard sandstorm, a couple of young Nevadans discovered gold on Columbia Mountain and named their first claim the O-Sandstorm and the camp Columbia. But it was the need of water and a desire to locate business buildings away from the mines that determined the location of the town of Goldfield late in 1902.

By the spring of 1904, a Reno journalist pulled into camp with an old hand press and fonts of type and other accessories. Vol. 1, No. 1 of the *Goldfield News* proclaimed "all that's new and true of the greatest gold camp ever known." In the meantime, miners from the Cripple Creek area in Colorado began a significant influx into Goldfield.

All in all, Goldfield fielded twelve newspapers, starting in 1904 with the *Goldfield News* and ending in 1958 with the *Goldfield Enterprise.*

Rhyolite Daily Bulletin
THE BULLFROG MINER

RHYOLITE was a busy, productive, and expansive area. It was comprised of the original discovery area of Bullfrog

and Bonanza, which expanded to include what came to be called Rhyolite, with Beatty only five miles away.

The paper was extremely conscious of self-acclaim. After the first year of publication, the editor noted "the *Miner* has no fault to find with Bullfrog, and perhaps it is safe to say the Bullfrog has had no fault to find with this newspaper."

April 13, 1905 saw the *Miner* printed on yellow paper, rather than the usual white newsprint. Explaining the cause, Editor Frank Mannix said, "This is not a souvenir issue, though it may have that complexion and though many doubtless will save the paper as a unique product of journalism on the desert."

Another edition of the *Bullfrog Miner* was published at Beatty by C. W. Nicklin, commencing April 8, 1905, and published simultaneously with Mannix's Bullfrog and Rhyolite editions. Nicklin's paper was a tabloid, whereas Mannix preferred the larger format. May 13, 1905 saw Nicklin alter his logotype to the *Beatty Bullfrog Miner*, an apparent attempt to distinguish it from Mannix's papers. Nicklin sold out to Clyde Terrell and Dan C. McKenna on January 12, 1907, with Nicklin noting the new owners had been "main springs in the concern from the beginning." Terrell stayed with the paper until it wound up in October, 1908.

Mannix continued his publication until October, 1909, when it was sold to Earl R. Clemens of the *Rhyolite Herald*, which was first published in May, 1905, and printed its "goodbye editorial" April 7, 1911. It claimed to have had a circulation of 10,000 in its heyday.

The *Rhyolite Daily Bulletin*, published by the Bulletin Company, was owned by App, Carr, and Peterson between September, 1907 and May, 1909. No issues were pub-

lished between May 16 and September 7, 1908. "The *Bulletin* will take a rest. Owing to John App of the *Bulletin* being called to Denver . . . this will be the last issue of the *Bulletin* until his return."

On March 19, 1909, the paper had this statement:

> Mr. H. F. Kane has become a member of the *Bulletin* company, and has assumed the position of editor of this paper. Mr. R. H. Carr, who has retired as editor and as a member of the company, desires to extend thanks to patrons.

The June 8, 1909 issue contained this announcement: "With this issue, publication of the *Rhyolite Daily Bulletin* is suspended. Prevailing business conditions of Rhyolite do not justify the publications of a daily newspaper here."

The Death Valley Chuck-Walla

GREENWATER had few peers in its meteoric rise, brief peak, and quick decline. Gold and silver locations had been made there in the 1880s, but it was high-grade copper ore that caused the final rush in 1905.

Curt E. Kunze and C. B. Glasscock, the *Chuck-Walla*'s owners and editors, were newspapermen fresh from a year's experience with the *San Francisco Examiner* which had included the days of the earthquake and fire. They had a definite philosophy:

> If you don't like it, don't read it. If you do read it, remember these facts: What it says is true; what it does is honest; it will call a liar a liar, a thief a thief, or an ass an ass, as is justified, and if you don't like it you may kick and be damned. Its editors

are its owners and will do as they see fit with their own, restricting themselves only insofar as they are restricted by their demand for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and their wish to give the devil his due.

The *Chuck-Walla*, "a magazine for men," measuring 4¼ inches in width and 6 inches in length, prospered well and had subscribers in every state, with patrons in Wall Street and many other eastern establishments—mostly involved in buying and selling Greenwater mining stocks.

The building which housed the *Chuck-Walla* and the *Greenwater Miner* burned to the ground and most of the equipment was lost with it. A new building was never constructed, nor was the equipment replaced. By that time Greenwater really had no place for a publication sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for the town and the area was on the skids. The press was later moved to the museum at Furnace Creek Ranch, where it now resides.

Though in the heart of the wilds, Greenwater had two newspapers in addition to the *Chuck-Walla* magazine, a $100,000 bank, express and telephone service, professional men of all kinds and, of course, ordinary lines of business. The two papers that added to the intellectual life of the area were the *Greenwater Times* and *Greenwater Miner*. Brown & Raber were editors of the *Times* and Major J. F. A. Strong of the *Miner*.

Raber appeared from Salt Lake City with a dilapidated job-printing plant which he set up in a tent and announced it as the home of the *Greenwater Times*, to be published weekly, at a subscription rate of six dollars a year. It was a unique sheet, printed in Salt Lake City.

Major Strong appeared on the scene from Nome, Alaska to publish the *Greenwater Miner*. He foresaw the impending demise of Greenwater and got out by selling to Kunze

and Glasscock, who continued publication of the *Miner* in addition to the *Chuck-Walla*.

Probably the most outstanding recognition in the local printing fraternity was described by Harold Weight:

> . . . the funeral of Billy Robinson, *Greenwater Miner* printer, dead of the DT's after a prolonged binge. The saints, sinners, and the in-betweens all attended Billy's rites and Tiger Lil, a "local dignitary," placed five aces in his hand pressed close to his breast "so he'll look natural."

Soon thereafter, most of the mine development ceased. Greenwater residents began to find their way out to the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, only thirty miles away. The panic of 1907 was Greenwater's final blow.

THE SKIDOO NEWS.

TWO PROSPECTORS were on their way to booming Harrisburg in the Panamints in 1905 when they lost their way in a fog and found the ledges that gave birth to Skidoo on top of Tucki Mountain.

The population of Skidoo numbered 700 or more at the camp's maximum. A bank and a newspaper were among its institutions. The *Skidoo News*, operated by M. B. McLeod, held forth for a year and a half in that camp. Gold and silver ores were its sources of production. It was unanimously decided to name the town "23 Skidoo" until the postal authorities balked at the numerals attached to the name.

LEADFIELD CHRONICLE

(Original banner not available.)

ANOTHER spectacular gorge between Grapevine Canyon and Boundary Canyon was the site of the short-lived mining boom at Leadfield, where the *Leadfield Chronicle* was published. A road was built from Beatty, Nevada, with more grade and more twists and turns than the combined total of all others around Death Valley. Leadfield, near the summit of the Grapevine, is at the head of Titus Canyon, a natural gash leading down to the Valley.

Leadfield seems to have been Death Valley's last gasp as a mining district on any impressive scale. C. C. Julian, a Canadian by way of Texas, with a gross reputation as a promoter, was already under fire in Southern California in connection with oil speculation. Leadfield failed to pull him out of those difficulties. Neither could he maintain Leadfield's initial boom. Together they sank into oblivion, with hardly a "pop" when Julian committed suicide in China by swallowing poison.

TRONA POTASH
TRONA ARGONAUT

(Original banner not available.)

TRONA had no publication distributed to the public until 1923, when the *Potash* was born. The first editor, John E. Caress, was employed at the time as a stenographer and telephone operator in the general office in Austin Hall. It was a highly interesting mimeograph sheet containing news and comments on local affairs, and received a warm welcome. This was a private enterprise without pay. The American Trona Corp., seeing the interest and need for

a regular weekly newspaper, took over the publication in June, 1924. Graessle, of the accounting department, was the first editor and chief.

The *Potash* grew into a slick paper of six pages. It was first printed in Los Angeles and later by Hubbard Printing in Randsburg. The paper lasted for seventeen years and had ten editors. It always had a staff of associate editors, whose only pay was the glory of seeing their articles in print. George Pipkin's first column, "Two Hole Ball," under the pseudonym of "Bob Coleman," appeared in 1936.

With the coming of World War II, Trona became a defense plant, and the *Potash* went into the newspaper business in a big way. A contest was held to give the paper a new name. Bob Oberteuffer, Lake Superintendent, won the $25 prize with the name *Argonaut*. This publication became one of the country's top weeklies. Clark Mills, George Sturtavent, Henry Taylor, Jr., Paul Hubbard, and Leonard Murname were some of the editors. The paper was suspended in March, 1953. For a while, the *San Bernardino Sun-Telegram* had a Trona page and so did the *Valley Independent* out of Ridgecrest.

A short time after the *Argonaut* went out of business, Marguerite Westphall came out with a weekly paper, the *Searles Review*. After about three years of publication she sold the paper, which was then owned by a series of publishers. The last owners combined with the *Trona Argonaut* to start a joint publication in 1964. The *Trona Argonaut* continues to be published by Doris Bray.

Other Publications

TWO OTHER PUBLICATIONS in Nye County, Nevada, merit attention. These were the *Death Valley Prospector* and the

Death Valley Magazine, which were actually one and the same and published by Paul DeLaney, an enthusiast about Nevada. The *Prospector* started publication in November, 1907, but had a short life — two months. In January, 1908, the name was changed to the *Death Valley Magazine*, and it continued until October, 1908, when the publication was suspended. These two publications contained many well-written stories of the desert and other interesting items and advertising.

Epilogue

In Laramie in 1877, the editor of the *Sentinel* saluted the demise of the rival *Wyoming Morning News* with an epitaph in verse:

> Leaf by leaf the roses fall,
> Dime by dime, the purse runs dry:
> One by one, beyond recall,
> Mushroom papers droop and die.

Another graphic description of the fates of mining towns and their newspapers is quoted from Time-Life's Old West Series, *The Chroniclers*:

> By the score, then the hundreds, finally the thousands, pioneer papers passed into oblivion, surviving only as crumbling files for antiquarians to ponder. Occasionally, back issues lingered on as wallpaper in some settler's shanty or, even more obscurely, as mattress padding or insulation under rugs; a few saw service as ladies' bustles. So many newspapers perished that any that endured for a dozen years were considered honorably ancient.

Such were also the fates of Death Valley's newspapers that once flourished in Inyo County, California, and Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada. Dave Basso lists forty-eight publications that rose and mostly fell in Nye County!

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